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- Gregorio, M. A.*—Intorne alla Pubblicazione di un gran Giornale Geologico Internazionale. From the author,
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GENERAL NOTES.

GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVELS.¹

THE DUTCH CIRCUMPOLAR EXPEDITION.—On July 5, 1882, the Dutch expedition embarked on the Norwegian steamer *Varna*. Before the end of August the *Varna* was surrounded by ice at about 70° N. lat. and 63° E. long. On September 18th the Danish steamer *Dijmphna* perceived the ship and attempted to render aid, but was itself surrounded by ice, and soon both ships were frozen in at about seventy-five yards distance from each other. At the commencement of October enormous crevasses opened in the ice, heralded by loud noises of cracking and splitting, and the crew, who at the first warning had left the ship, found themselves completely separated from it. After the crevasses had frozen over, the crew regained the ship, and continued observations until Christmas eve, when the ice floes again put themselves in motion, crashing against each other with such force that the *Varna* was literally crushed. The crew escaped with safety, and with their documents, instruments, dogs and sledges, took refuge on board the *Dijmphnu*, the solid construction of which enabled it to resist the movement of the ice.

Here they were compelled to remain until August 1st, when, as the *Dijmphna* had orders to spend a second winter in the Arctic, they made for the land by means of boats and sledges, and reached Waigatz island in three weeks. Here they fell in with the *Louise*, the *Nordenskjold* and the *Obi*, all sent in search of the *Varna*. All collections and papers were saved; and not one of the crew was lost, in spite of the hardships endured.

AFRICA.—*The Dunes of the Sahara*.—Not more than a ninth part of the surface of the Sahara is occupied by sand-dunes, the principal groups of which are in the north of that desert, and are those of Erg, in the Algerian Sahara, that of Iguidi, which

¹ This department is edited by W. N. LOCKINGTON, Philadelphia.

continues the Erg group to the south-west into Morocco, and that of Edeyen to the south-east of Erg. The Erg group extends from the 20° to 34° N. lat., and from 7° E. long., to 4° W. long. Erg alone is reckoned to occupy 12,000,000 hectares, or about 45,000 square miles, but the estimate is probably too large, as immense spaces within the area are free from dunes. The dunes are in some places piled into chains of sand mountains, which may reach several kilometers in width, and 500 to 600 feet in height. The true dune, when not piled on other dunes, is of uniform composition and regular form. The grains are usually less than a millimeter in diameter, and the shape of the dune is an elongated ellipse, with a concavity cut out of the leeward side. The sand, driven by the wind, climbs up the long gradual slope of the ellipse, and falls over the abrupt talus of the short concave side, which is bounded above by a sharp edge. A simple dune seldom exceeds sixty-five feet in height, but here and there one rises to more than two hundred feet.

The dunes occupy basins of Quaternary age, and have been formed by the disintegration of rocks of various ages. Disintegration proceeds less rapidly in a dry climate than in a wet one, but in the Sahara there is no vegetation to protect the surface, and the disintegrated material is never consolidated into soil. The chief causes of rock disintegration in the Sahara are the great difference of temperature, amounting often to 100° C., between the day and the night, and the action of wind-blown sand upon the rocks; chemical action and the infrequent rains may be added.

Comali-land.—The Geographical Society of Paris has recently published the results of the journey to the country of the Comalis, undertaken by M. Revoil in 1880. The region may be divided into three zones, the coast, where the towns are situated; the mountains, which are often calcareous and are identical in their stratification with those along the borders of the Red sea; and the interior plateau, inhabited by nomads with their flocks. The coast is chiefly a belt of sand, interrupted here and there by cliffs, and with a vegetation of acacias and a few other spiny shrubs with some shore plants. The interior is a series of great steppes, sometimes unrelieved by a shrub, and covered with a bed of blackish siliceous sand. These steppes are interrupted by immense pastures, affording subsistence to the numerous herds of oxen, sheep, goats, asses, horses and camels which constitute the only riches of the Comalis of the interior. Most of the streams are torrents of short course, and the only river worthy of the name is the Darror, which rises in the Hodaftemo mountains, runs south-west through a great valley, and falls into the Indian ocean. The valley would be a desert were it not for fine pastures here and there. The climate is temperate, yet rises to 34° C. on the coast, and to 45° or even 55° C. in the sun on the

interior plateau. In the mountains, at an elevation of over 5000 feet, it sometimes sinks to 11.5° C. The nomads of the steppes never cultivate the soil, are incurably lazy, wear only a piece of skin or simple cloth for clothing, and suffer greatly from phthisis and rheumatism, brought about by the action of the sudden changes of temperature on their undefended bodies. The other maladies most common among the Comalis are ophthalmia, cutaneous affections and scrofula. They have learned from the Arabs the use of a few herbs, but the universal remedies are bleeding and cauterization. Almost every native is tattooed all over with burns and scarifications.

The principal interest of this journey is ethnographic. The oldest human vestiges consist of heaps of shells mixed with bones of fishes and turtles, and strewn with flint implements of various kinds and remains of rude pottery. M. Revoil concludes that these remains must antedate 1700 B. C., and bases this opinion upon the fact that the Egyptian paintings of the tomb of Beikmara and those of the temple of Deir-el-Bahari show the inhabitants of Poum, that is, the Comalis, in the possession of metals. M. Revoil believes these mounds to be the work of the Ichthyophagi and Troglodytes of the old historians; while the more recent mounds of Hais, with their green and blue enameled pottery, are pronounced of the Ptolomean era; and the red pottery, amphoras, glass, etc., especially those found at Olok, seem to be of Roman age. M. Revoil believes that contact with the ancient Egyptians and the Ptolomean Greeks raised the Poum or Comali race to a comparatively high state of culture, which the Arab occupation has effaced.

Their arms are the bow and arrow, the lance, long and short, and the sabre and shield. Their cylindrical quiver greatly resembles that of the Egyptian infantry of the xviii dynasty. Spite of their debasement and their conversion to Islamism, their physiognomy, their habits, even their dress recall Egyptian, Greek or Roman more than Arab. The men wear still the *sagum arsinveticum*, while the women are attired in the *degou*, which is fastened at the shoulder, and resembles the *peplum* of the Greeks. At a wedding or a marriage they carry the *dairabad* or censer, in which they consume a resinous gum which gives out an odor like that of Russia leather.

GEOLOGY AND PALÆONTOLOGY.

M. JULES MARCOU ON THE GEOLOGY OF CALIFORNIA.—In a recent issue of the Bulletin of the French Geological Society, M. Marcou reviews the work done by American geologists, and adds thereto conclusions derived from his own observations. The "director of the Geological Survey," sometimes by name, at others by title, is, in this article, subjected to a series of severe castigations. After describing the syenitic granite, the contorted